



Seat Leon FR



Advanced motorist and editor of Travel and motoring magazine, **Tim Saunders** regularly reviews vehicles from the leading manufacturers. Videos on his YouTube channel have been watched more than 300,000 times.

His first report on a BMW 520i was published in the Dorset Echo when he was 17 (just after passing his driving test) in 1995. He went on to become business and motoring editor at the Bournemouth Echo. Now, his engaging and informative reviews are published in newspapers and magazines in the UK and abroad. Tim also writes poetry and fiction and has two new books out now. www.testdrives.biz

It wasn't so long ago that estate cars were deadly dull and boring.

Thankfully, times have changed and there is now a plethora of such vehicles that are really quite attractive to the eye as well as being supremely practical.

You'll never get rid of the estate because families will always have a need for them as indeed do antique dealers for their longcase clocks and such like due to the large load carrying capacity. Whether you need to carry a pram or pushchair, a couple of bicycles or masses of shopping they can handle it while transporting five occupants. They all do this, from Lovejoy's old and decrepit Volvo through to the estate agent's flash new Audi or Mercedes.

In the grand scheme of things the Seat Leon estate is a mid market offering for the upwardly mobile. There's decent Germanic styling, as expected from the VW stable, and good all round build quality. But as I admire it I can't help feeling that it does look, dare I say it, a little dated. While this FR Sport version is quite low to the ground it looks a bit chubby

round the middle, a bit like I feel when I'm running. A glance down the side does remind me slightly of a modern Volvo, which is no bad thing because they have improved their looks over recent years. It is quite remarkable that while the boot offers an enormous 620 litres of carrying capacity it will hit 60mph from standstill in under nine seconds.

Importantly it's also fun to drive; it feels like you're driving a smaller car; that's some achievement. I forget that I am driving such a long car until I get out and realise. It is quick and it can be driven like a racing car thanks to the paddleshifts either side of the steering wheel. The brakes seem a bit spongy for my liking and take a bit of pumping to stop as desired. As a driver's car it scores highly and the sporty leather steering wheel feels good. However, my wife complains about the hard suspension.

Inside it is black and practical. The leather seats are comfortable and there are all the mod cons we have all grown used to from electric windows, electrically operated power folding wing mirrors to sat nav

and cruise control. Usually the controls for the latter can be found on the right hand side of the steering wheel but in the Seat they are on the left, to confuse me. It takes a little while to overcome this.

The children enjoy the centre control panel, which houses the entertainment system. They quickly discover that they can swipe across the screen to change the clock style from digital to analogue. There's also voice activation but it is a bit limiting for Henry (5) who tells it to "Fly me to the moon." They also discover the ski hatch from the rear to the boot and enjoy sliding their coats through it. There's a centre armrest that can be used when there are just two rear passengers. There's a good amount of space throughout.

Facts at a glance

Seat Leon FR Sport Estate
 1.5 eTSI EVO DSG-auto
 Petrol 150 7-speed automatic
 Price: £29,805
 Top speed: 135mph
 0 to 60mph: 8.7secs
 Power: 150bhp
 Economy: 48.7mpg (combined)

Watch the video review at www.testdrives.biz